

# What's the Name of That Bird?



**Great Blue Heron**  
The “Blue Crane” of Missouri. Seen year-round near ponds, rivers and wetlands; less common in winter. Stands still or moves slowly in shallow water as it hunts for fish or amphibians to eat.



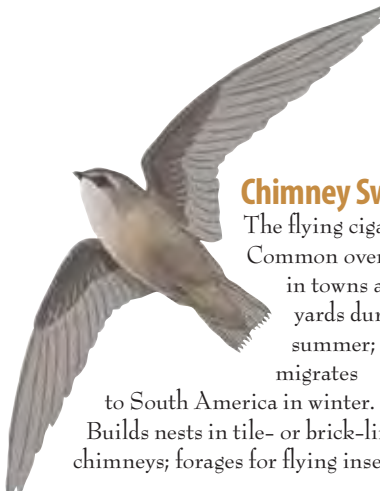
**Turkey Vulture**  
The large, black bird that circles high in the sky. Common year-round near grasslands and wooded places; less common in winter. Eats dead animal carcasses along roadsides.




**American Kestrel**  
The small falcon that hovers above grassy roadsides. Seen year-round in grasslands, especially during migration in spring and fall. More common in southern Missouri than northern. Adults have two distinctive black streaks down their cheeks.



**Red-tailed Hawk**  
The roadside sentinel perched on telephone poles and tree branches. Common year-round in grasslands and open areas, especially in winter. Swoops down on rabbits, rodents and snakes.



**Chimney Swift**  
The flying cigar. Common overhead in towns and yards during summer; migrates to South America in winter. Builds nests in tile- or brick-lined chimneys; forages for flying insects.



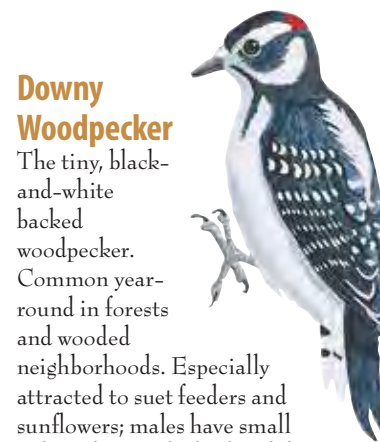
**Killdeer**  
The shorebird that nests on gravel driveways and in crop fields. Here year-round in grassy areas, but rarely seen in winter. Forages for insects along muddy shorelines and in flooded fields and lawns.



**Barn Swallow**  
The mud-nest builder. Abundant in towns and yards in summer; migrates to Mexico, South and Central America in winter. Builds mud nests lined with plants and feathers under eaves, porches, roof overhangs and in barns.



**Common Nighthawk**  
The striped-winged bird that swoops near streetlights in towns and yards. Common in summer; migrates to South America in winter. Males dive straight down and make a loud, whirring sound as they swoop suddenly upward, just missing the ground.



**Downy Woodpecker**  
The tiny, black-and-white backed woodpecker. Common year-round in forests and wooded neighborhoods. Especially attracted to suet feeders and sunflowers; males have small red patches on the backs of their heads.



**Dark-eyed Junco**  
The busy “snowbird” on the ground under your feeder. Common in shrubs and brushy areas in winter; spends the summer in Canada and northern United States. They flock to feeders in groups and are sometimes the most frequent feeder visitors.



**Northern Mockingbird**  
The birdsong impersonator. Common year-round in shrubs and brushy areas. Song is varied and mimics other birds. Often seen walking along the ground opening and closing its wings.



**Red-winged Blackbird**  
The black songbird with the flashy red shoulders. Seen year-round in wetlands and moist grasslands and at birdfeeders in snowy weather. Often gather in large flocks near crop fields; make a “rusty hinge” sounding song.



**White-breasted Nuthatch**  
The upside-down bird. Common year-round in woodlands, parks and suburban areas. Forages for insects, seeds and berries; often walks upside down on tree trunks and branches.



**Common Grackle**  
The black bird with the shimmering blue-green head. Seen year-round in towns and yards, especially in spring, summer and fall. Males often put on a display by puffing up and pointing their beaks.



**Tufted Titmouse**  
The scolding bird with a pointed crest atop its head. Lives year-round in forests, woodlands and suburban areas. Makes a distinct peter-peter-peter whistling sound.



**American Goldfinch**  
In summer, the canary-yellow bird with black wings. Found year-round in grasslands and suburban areas. They stick together in flocks and have a noticeable undulating—or dipping—flight pattern; yellow color fades to olive in winter.



**Black-capped Chickadee/ Carolina Chickadee**  
The common feeder birds that call chickadee-dee-dee. Common year-round in forests, woodlands and neighborhoods with plenty of large trees. The black-capped is found in northern Missouri and the Carolina in southern Missouri. Similar in appearance, the black-capped has more white on its wing in winter and its call is slower; both are frequent visitors to feeders and easily approached.



**Indigo Bunting**  
The iridescent-blue bird from head to tail. Commonly seen in brushy fields, forest openings and woodland edges in summer; migrates to Mexico and south to Panama in winter. Frequently seen flying up from gravel roads.



**Eastern Meadowlark**  
The yellow-breasted bird that sings loudly in the pastures. Found in grasslands, crop fields and pastures. Abundant in spring and summer; less common in winter. In winter, they often are seen near livestock areas feeding on spilled grain.



**House Wren**  
The little brown bird with an incredible song. Frequent visitors in towns and yards. Abundant in the spring and summer; migrate to southern United States and Mexico in winter. May nest in porch planters, mailboxes or other unusual places with tucked-away or round openings.



**Mourning Dove**  
The cooing lovebird. Found in grasslands, towns and suburbs. Common year-round, though especially abundant in spring and summer, less so in fall and rarer in winter. Shaped somewhat like rock pigeons, though slimmer.



**Eastern Phoebe**  
The bird that bobs its tail. Common in towns and yards in spring, summer and fall; usually migrates south in winter. Often seen near bridges, porches, barns or cliffs where they nest and eat insects.













**Song Sparrow**  
Missouri’s permanent-resident sparrow. Common year-round in weedy fields, brushy floodplains and at bird feeders in most of Missouri, except rare in the Ozarks. Missouri has 19 different species of sparrow, and they are one of the more difficult groups of birds to identify.



**Eastern Bluebird**  
The bright, blue bird with a reddish chest. Grasslands with scattered trees, open areas and backyards in rural areas. Seen year-round; less common in winter. Missouri’s state bird; will often nest in boxes mounted on fence posts.

## The Easy IDs

Some of Missouri’s most familiar and quickly identified birds

 <b>American Robin</b>	 <b>American Crow</b>	 <b>Northern Cardinal</b>	 <b>Canada Goose</b>	 <b>Blue Jay</b>	 <b>Rock Pigeon (Dove)</b>	
<b>Non-natives</b>			<b>Recent Immigrant</b>		<b>Brood Parasite</b>	
<p>The European starling and house sparrow are not native to the United States; they were introduced from Europe. The house finch is a North American bird that has expanded its range to include Missouri. The brown-headed cowbird is a Missouri native, but because of forest land clearing it has expanded its Missouri range. All four species compete with and sometimes threaten native species’ populations. To learn more about invasive species, visit <a href="http://short.mdc.mo.gov/Zo8">short.mdc.mo.gov/Zo8</a>.</p>			 <b>European Starling</b> The speckled, gregarious birds at the feeder.	 <b>House Sparrow</b> The fast-food parking lot bird, sometimes called English sparrow.	 <b>House Finch</b> The reddish-purple feeder bird, sometimes called the Hollyhock finch.	 <b>Brown-headed Cowbird</b> Lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, which, unwittingly, raise the young.



# Feeding Backyard Birds

According to a survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 51.3 million Americans report that they watch birds. This number grows annually, and many of them watch birds right in their own backyards. Missouri is a great state for birds. Of the approximately 900 species in North America, more than 400 have been recorded in Missouri, and more than 150 species regularly nest in our state. Maintaining a birdfeeder in your yard is an entertaining and relatively easy way to get to know some of them.

Birds certainly benefit from easy access to food in feeders, but keep in mind that they would do just fine without it. The real beneficiaries of backyard bird feeding are people; birds at feeders are beautiful to watch, often amusing and companionable. To keep birds returning to your feeders in any season, you need to provide them with three essential elements:

- A variety of good-quality seed
- Fresh water for drinking and bathing
- Plenty of places to take cover—preferably native trees and shrubs. Native plants also provide potential nesting sites and sources of natural food.

Not all the birds on the other side of this poster will come to a feeder; some species, such as the great blue heron and red-tailed hawk, are carnivores. Herons eat fish, amphibians and crayfish; hawks prey on rodents, snakes and, sometimes, other birds. Meadowlarks, nighthawks and chimney swifts eat flying insects. Many birds, however, will come readily to well-stocked feeders.

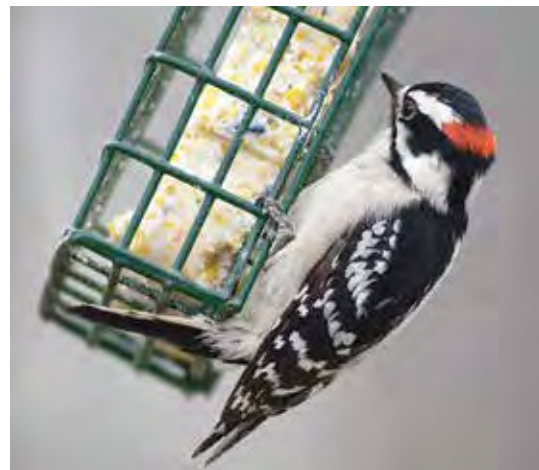


## What is the Best Season to Feed Birds?

While winter is the most popular time to stock feeders, many people enjoy feeding birds year-round. That's because different species visit feeders during different seasons. For example, some birds are only summer residents in Missouri; others are here only in the winter months. Behavior also changes with the seasons. In the spring and summer, many young birds follow their parents to the feeder. It is fascinating to watch the adults show their young to the feeder and show them how to crack open the seeds.

People often say that once you start feeding birds, it's better for them if you remain diligent and continue to feed them routinely. In fact, no research indicates that during normal weather, birds will starve if feeding is stopped for a time. Remember, birds are highly mobile and resourceful. They often visit many feeding stations in a neighborhood, and if yours runs out, they will seek food elsewhere.

In addition to seeds, birds also eat suet, fruit and nectar. Suet, which is made from animal fat, is sold in small blocks and fits into specially designed wire cages that can hang from a limb or post. In summer, suet will sometimes spoil in the heat if it goes uneaten for a long period of time. If this happens, throw it out and start over with a fresh block, and try to hang it in a shady spot. Peanut butter is a good substitute for suet in the summer. Mix one part peanut butter with five parts corn meal and stuff the mixture into holes drilled in a hanging log or into the crevices of a large pinecone. This all-season mixture—as well as suet—attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice and, occasionally, warblers.



Some birds such as waxwings, bluebirds and mockingbirds eat fruit and rarely birdseed. To attract these birds, soak raisins and currants in water overnight, then place them on a table feeder. To attract orioles and tanagers, cut oranges in half and skewer them onto a spike and place them near other feeders.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are attracted to nectar feeders. Hummingbird feeders are fairly inexpensive, and it is easy to make the sugar-water "nectar" yourself. Simply make a sugar solution of one part white sugar to four parts water. There is no need to add red food coloring. Feeders must be washed every few days with very hot water and kept scrupulously clean to prevent the growth of bacteria. Change the nectar at least weekly, or more often if it becomes cloudy.

Never use artificial sweeteners in feeders. Honey-water is sometimes wrongly recommended because it has a higher nutrient content than sugar-water. There are great dangers in using honey, however, because if the solution is not boiled and the feeder not cleaned each time before filling, a fungus that will attack the bird's tongue can grow in the mix. In Missouri, hummingbirds typically visit feeders April 25 to the end of September, with the spring and fall seasons being the busiest.

## What Should My Feeding Station Look Like?

Your bird feeding station may be as simple or as elaborate as you like. You may choose to simply scatter seeds on the ground, build your own platform, or hang several store-bought feeders of various shapes and sizes throughout your yard. Remember that there are differences in feeding habits among birds. Songbirds, such as the dark-eyed junco or white-crowned sparrow, prefer to feed directly on the ground. Cardinals and blue jays will feed either on the ground or on a platform. Goldfinch and chickadees also will visit small, plastic feeders that are fixed to the outside of a window by a suction cup. Because feeding birds is primarily for your own pleasure, place your feeders where you can see them from a favorite, inside vantage point.



## What Are the Best Types of Foods?

A report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—based on almost 750,000 observations of birds choosing between two or more seed types at specially constructed feeding stations—shows that those species that prefer large seeds are highly attracted to sunflower seed. The most favored is the smaller, black-oil sunflower seed and not the more familiar striped varieties. The study included several seeds types, but three stand out as being the best food types for attracting the most species of birds:



Black-oil sunflower seeds attract the widest variety of birds that eat seeds. It can be purchased at reasonable prices in bulk, usually 25- to 50-pound bags. It's best to avoid buying small bags of colorful, mixed seeds. They often contain common cereal grains such as milo, wheat, oats and rice that few birds will eat.



White millet, also available in bulk, is appealing to doves, sparrows, juncos and other birds that feed on the ground. It works well to scatter it on the ground underneath a feeder that is stocked with black-oil sunflower seed. Cracked corn is also inexpensive and recommended for spreading around on the ground for doves and sparrows. Squirrels eat corn, too, and it may help somewhat in keeping them out of your feeders.



Niger "thistle" is a small seed that usually goes into cylindrical feeders equipped with several perches and small holes from which the birds extract seeds. American goldfinches and purple finches, especially, are attracted to niger. It is more expensive than black-oil sunflower seeds, but fewer species eat it; consequently, it lasts somewhat longer.

## What About Water and Landscaping?

To increase the popularity of your feeding station, furnish water—preferably year-round. The Carolina wren and the bluebird, Missouri's state bird, may be enticed to feeding stations during the winter if water is available. During prolonged periods of ice or snow cover, provide grit (coarse sand or ground shells) along with the seed. Birds lack teeth, and the grit that they keep in their gizzards is used to grind up seeds.



Besides furnishing the most attractive seed and a clean water supply, you may entice birds to your yard in other ways. Native trees, shrubs, vines and flowers not only produce food for birds, but they also provide cover. Many decorative trees and shrubs produce fruits and berries for birds. Holly, hawthorn and persimmon, for example, are favorites of cedar waxwings.



In new housing developments, trees and shrubs that birds use for nesting, perching and escaping predators are often in short supply. Birds need places to perch overnight and vantage points from which they not only can approach your feeder, but from where they also can watch for potential predators.

To learn more about birding in Missouri, go to [short.mdc.mo.gov/ZoX](http://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZoX)



## Birds in Missouri

By Brad Jacobs

*Birds in Missouri* is the definitive guide to birds in our state. It is a 400 page, full color book with 354 illustrations of Missouri's birds, including resident, migrant, breeding and winter resident species. It is written in a conversational style suitable for both novice and experienced bird enthusiasts, and it also includes range maps and seasonal abundance graphs. Seventeen two page habitat scenes portray Missouri's diverse natural and urban landscapes. Published by the Missouri Department of Conservation, it is available at conservation nature centers, bookstores statewide or on the web at [mdcnatureshop.com](http://mdcnatureshop.com)



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